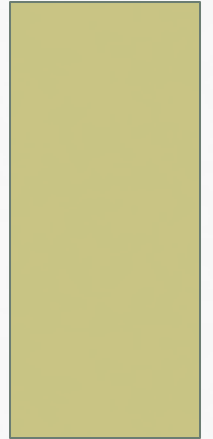




THE VIETNAM WAR ERA

US INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM, 1945 - 1975



THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR

- For thousands of years, the Vietnamese people asserted for their independence against Chinese emperors and leaders who sought to exact tributes or “civilize” the Vietnamese by forcing them to adopt Chinese Culture.
- In the 1800s, France established a sphere of influence in the region; by 1858, France had claimed Vietnam – “French Indochina” as its colony.
- France established plantation agriculture using Vietnamese laborers, and grew rice, tea, tobacco, and indigo for export. Other natural resources created industries like tin and rubber for use by French businessmen.

VIETNAM DURING WORLD WAR II

- During World War II, the Japanese invaded and took control over Vietnam – a point which Ho Chi Minh makes clear in his Declaration of Independence after the war. Once the war came to an end, Ho Chi Minh – who had previously asked American President Woodrow Wilson to support Vietnamese independence, appealed to the United States again.



HO CHI MINH'S VIETNAMESE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

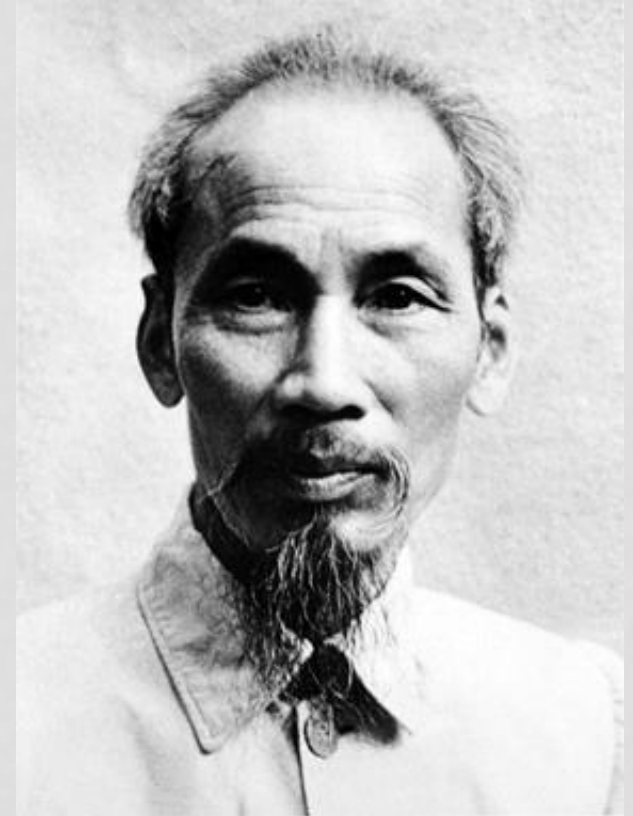
"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, this means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live, to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the French Revolution made in 1791 on the Rights of Man and the Citizen also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights."

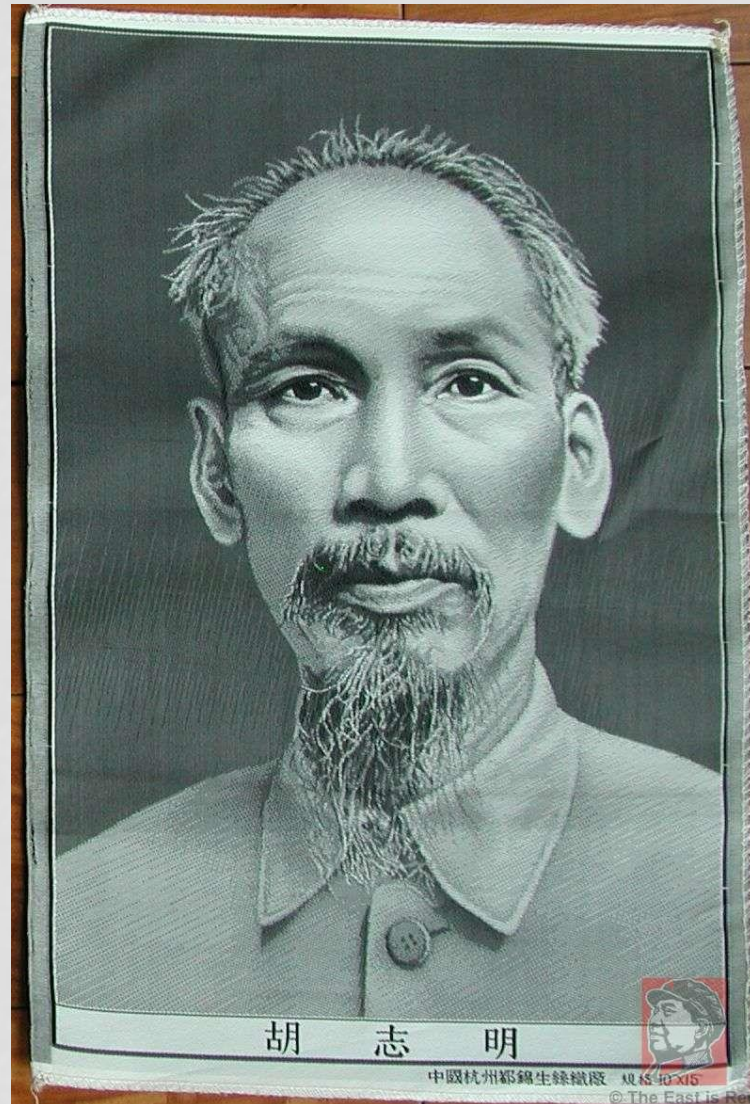
Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.



HO CHI MINH

Although he modeled the Declaration of Independence on Thomas Jefferson's work, Americans were wary of communism at the end of World War II, and sought to assist our longtime ally, France.





THE FIRST INDO-CHINESE WAR, 1946 - 1954

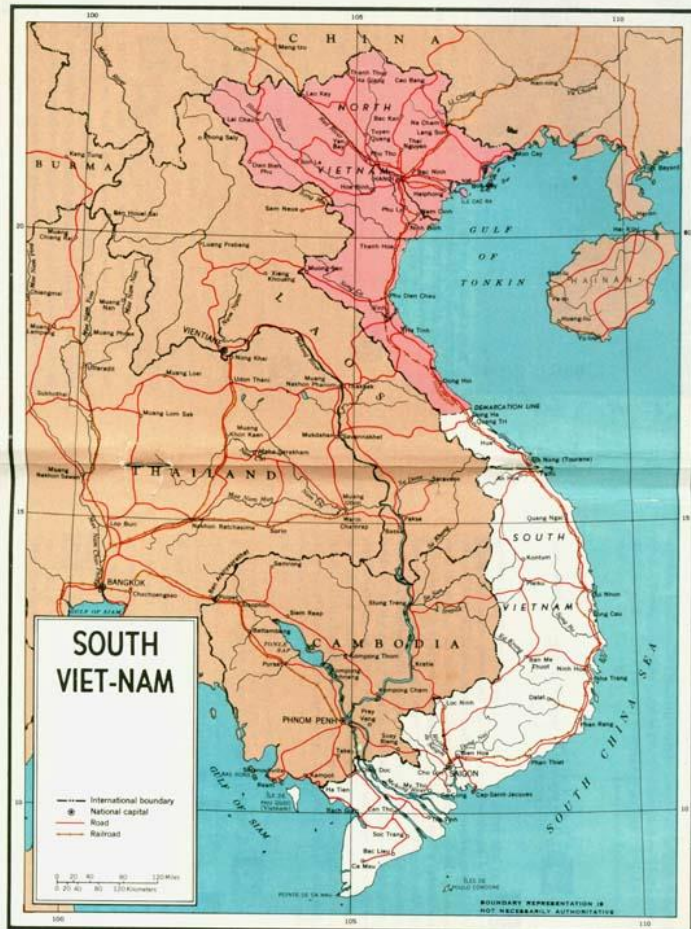
THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTED FRANCE

DIEN BIEN PHU

At the battle of Dien Bien Phu, Vietnamese revolutionaries force the French – who enjoyed American monetary support – to surrender. After Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Accords were signed in order to divide Vietnam between pro Communist forces under Ho and anti-communist forces.



TWO VIETNAMS

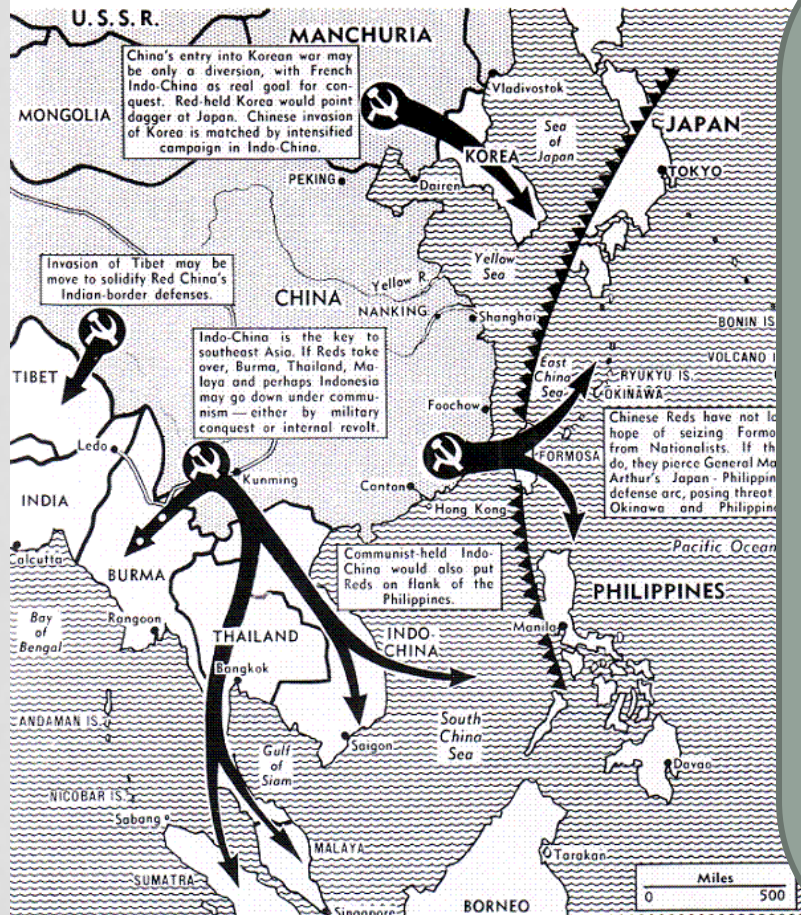


The United States supported a divided Vietnam, at the 17th Parallel. Ho controlled the North, and anti-communist leader Ngo Dinh Diem was the anti-communist leader of South Vietnam. As the textbook suggests, “Anticommunism is a lousy substitute for democracy.” Elections to unify the nation under one government in 1958 were blocked by Diem and the United States when it became apparent that Ho Chi Minh would win upwards of 80% of the vote.

THE DOMINO THEORY

- The Domino Theory was the belief that if one country fell to the communists, neighboring nations would be threatened and ultimately capitulate to communist nations.
- The fear that communist sought to spread their ideology, government, economic policies, and philosophies – by force when necessary – was widely perceived. The US viewed the USSR – China – North Korea – and now Vietnam, as dominos in a line, one nation falling because others before it had converted to communism.

THE DOMINO THEORY



The Domino Theory was driven by several fears. First, that the Soviet Union was behind every communist movement –globally. The idea that a monolithic form of communism was behind virtually every socialist or Marxist movement proved to be untrue, (many foreign policy contributors were already convinced of this) but Americans developed their foreign policy as if it were. In reality, significant divides existed between the Chinese and the Soviets – and North Korean and Vietnamese leaders paid little deference to either the USSR or the Chinese.

THE DOMINO THEORY



SOUTH VIETNAM – AMERICA'S ALLY



NGO DINH DIEM: OUR GUY IN SOUTH VIETNAM, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE?

Although anti-communist, there was little to like about Diem. He was elected by fraud following the Geneva Accords, and used brute force against political rivals. Moreover, he was a staunch Catholic who persecuted the Buddhist majority in his own nation. The main reason for his rise to power was his American education and strong anti-communist philosophy. By his own people he was hated.



BUDDHIST SELF- IMMOLATION

As an act of protest against Diem, Buddhist monks burned themselves alive in the middle of busy intersections. Americans wondered who we were supporting in light of such reports. Throughout the Vietnam War, Americans questioned the loyalty of and the actions of our South Vietnamese allies.





NGO DIEM WAS ASSASSINATED IN 1963.

A MILITARY COUP RESULTED IN HIS DEATH, AMERICANS WERE
LATER ACCUSED OF "GIVING THE SIGNAL" TO OVERTHROW HIM.

KENNEDY ASSASSINATED

The Kennedy Assassination followed just months afterwards. The influence of Kennedy's death on the course of the Vietnam War has been a topic of much discussion in historical circles. Many of those closest to Kennedy believe that he was ready to withdraw completely from the region. Once LBJ assumed leadership of the nation, the domino theory began to dictate terms once again.



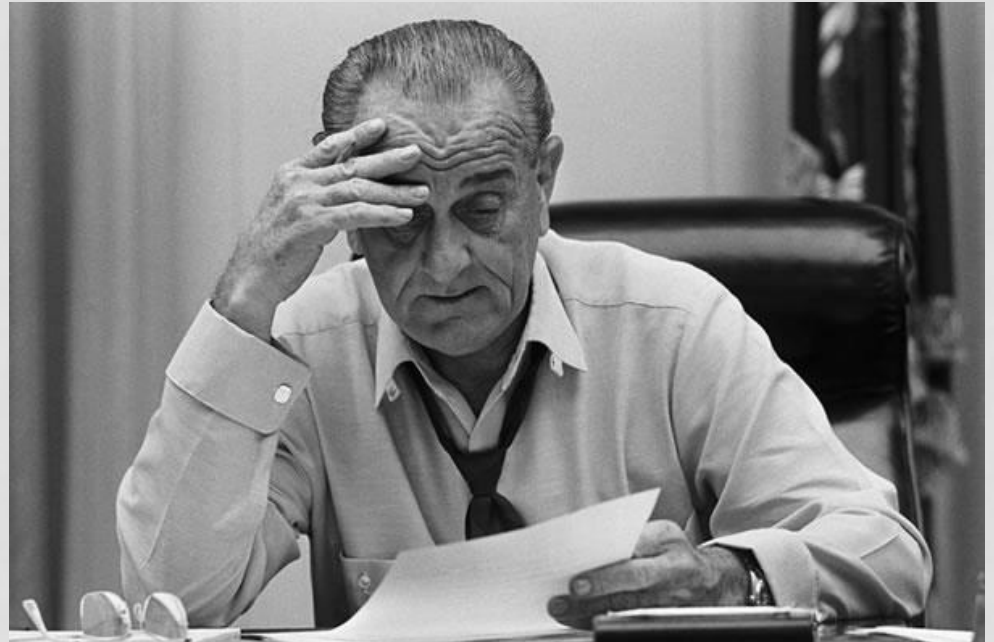
NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT, OR THE VIETCONG

In South Vietnam, opposition leaders – groups which opposed both the Diem regime and the military coup – were being supplied by the North Vietnamese communist forces and Ho Chi Minh. Ho, and the North Vietnamese, were receiving aid from the USSR – lending evidence to the argument that the Kremlin controlled all. These opposition forces would eventually cause American soldiers enormous anxiety – creating an atmosphere where no one could be trusted.



LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON

“If I left the woman I really loved – the Great Society – in order to get involved with that bitch of war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home. All my programs. All my hopes to feed the hungry and shelter the homeless. All my dreams to provide education and medical care to the browns and the blacks and the lame and the poor. But if I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser, and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere on the entire globe. Oh, I could see it coming all right.”

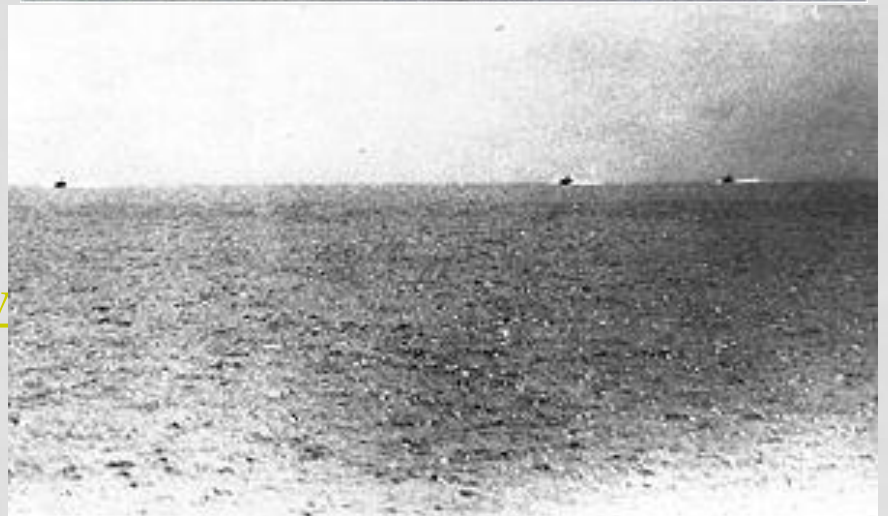


LBJ had hoped to be a President in the style of Franklin Roosevelt, and imitated his domestic programs: Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, the Civil Rights Act, and the Voting Rights Act. But his Presidency and his legacy were ruined by American involvement in Vietnam.

THE GULF OF TONKIN – USS MADDOX

Reportedly, the American destroyer USS Maddox was attacked in August of 1964 by three North Vietnamese torpedo boats. The USS Turner Joy had also reportedly been under assault recently. There is some dispute over whether or not this incident took place – at all. The United States used the incident to justify escalation into the Vietnam War. In retrospect, many in the State Department at the time suggested that the event was contrived. Robert McNamara, the Secretary of Defense, explains:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=76wv2ybJelQ>



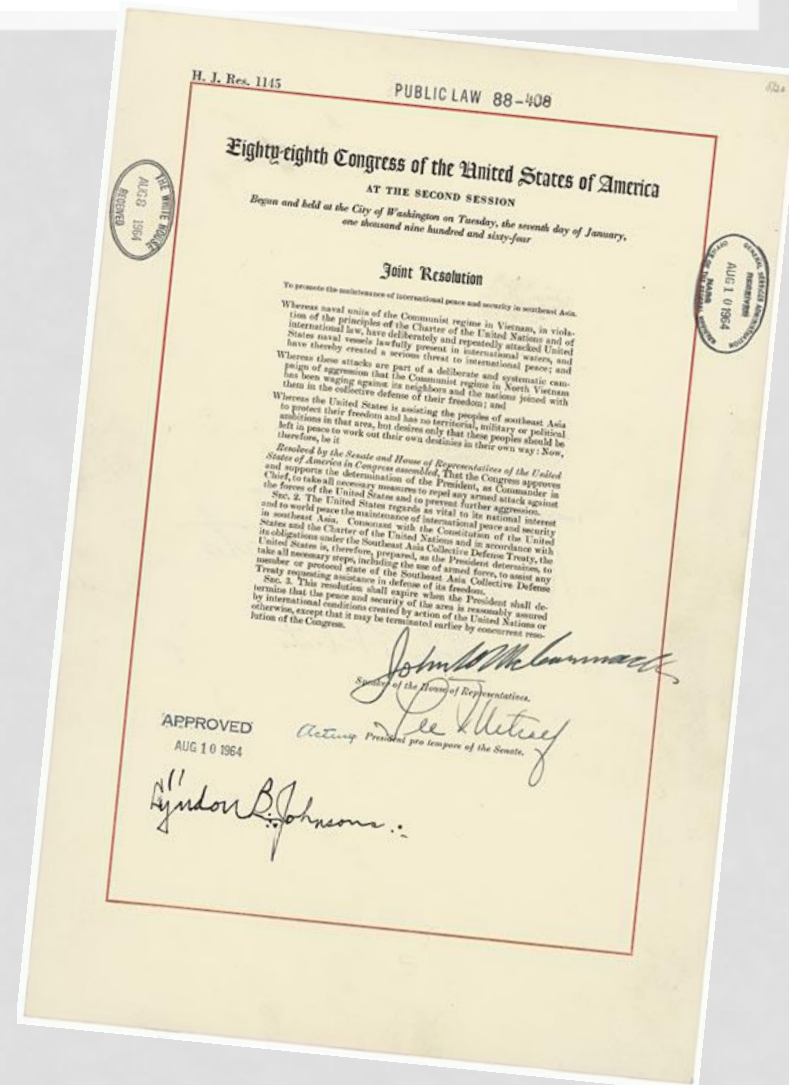
THE GULF OF TONKIN RESOLUTION: A DECLARATION OF WAR IN VIETNAM

The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed by Congress in the fall of 1964 granted the President the authority to fight against the communist threat in North Vietnam.

The resolution read, in part, "*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.*"

Section 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

Section 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress.



LBJ AND ESCALATION

Starting with the landing of close to 50,000 American soldiers to protect US air strips in Da Nang, the United States escalated the number of troops present in South Vietnam to 500,000 soldiers by 1968. The United States continued bombing the North Vietnamese – using weapons like Agent Orange and napalm in order to get a better look at the enemy through the heavy jungle canopy in Vietnam.





OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER

US BOMBING MISSIONS OVER NORTH VIETNAM



NAPALM

USED AS A DEFOLIANT TO IDENTIFY AND BOMB THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL, NAPALM INSTILLED FEAR IN COMMUNITIES IN VIETNAM.



AGENT ORANGE

A CHEMICAL DEFOLIANT, IT IS NOW A KNOWN CARCINOGEN, AND IT IS COMMONLY ASSUMED TO HAVE CAUSED SERIOUS BIRTH DEFECTS AND MISCARRIAGES.

SEARCH AND DESTROY

The “search and destroy” missions which American soldiers were sent out on throughout the Vietnam War resulted in unspeakable civilian deaths and casualties. At one point, American politicians defended the missions by stating, “In order to save these villages, we must destroy them.” The thought that Americans could spread democracy using violent force, of course, was heavily criticized by many Americans. It is estimated that as many as two to three million Vietnamese people were killed during the conflict – and yet, the people were so devoted to the cause of independence, they refused to stop fighting.

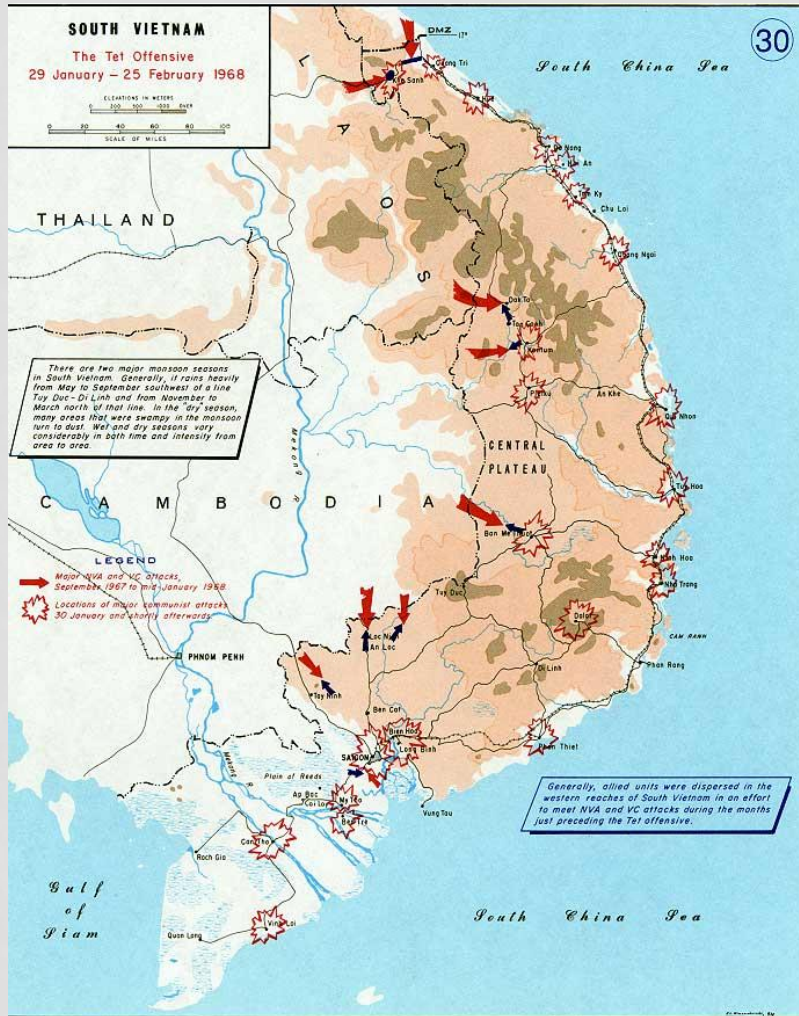


THE MY LAI MASSACRE

The My Lai Massacre is one of the most troubling examples of American soldiers losing their grip. The My Lai Massacre, ordered by Lt. William Calley, was the ordered murder of an entire village – mostly women, children, and elderly persons. Calley, believing that the men and women in the village must be hiding the whereabouts of their men – and suspecting that they were Vietcong members, ordered the mass execution of the village.



30



Although the Tet Offensive was a complete surprise to American soldiers – most of whom believed the communist Vietnamese had little strength remaining and were on the verge of collapse – it was not a military victory. American soldiers recaptured all of the territory they conceded, and won the battle militarily. Yet, as a psychological ploy, Tet was the coup de grace for American forces. Walter Cronkite reported, “We are mired in stalemate.”



A DIVIDED NATION

HAWKS VS. DOVES

THE CHAOS OF VIETNAM

Images such as the one to the right forces Americans to re-evaluate our purpose in Vietnam. The chief of police shot this young man, suspected of supporting the Vietcong, to death in front of cameras.



Colonel Nguyen Ngoc Loan executes a suspected member of the Vietcong, Nguyen Van Lem. Many Americans were aghast. If Loan was the type of Vietnamese leader we were fighting to protect, were we on the right course? Many decided to protest.

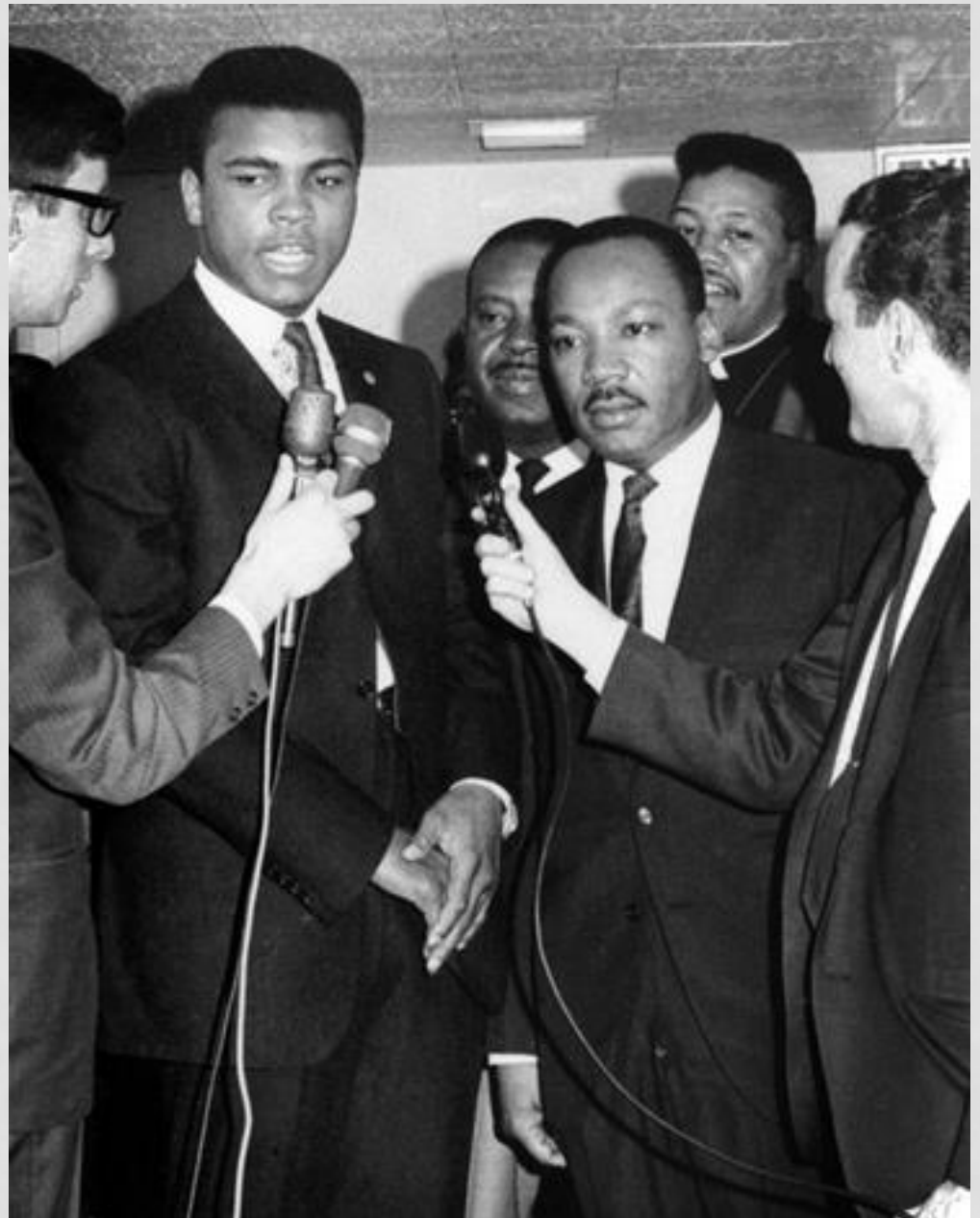
MASSIVE PROTESTS OVER VIETNAM

Protests erupted on college campuses throughout the nation, as students not only refused to register for or respond to the draft, but also fought against police and national guardsmen. The burning of draft cards was one common method of protest – tens of thousands fled for Canada, while others accepted jail time or registered as conscientious objectors.



MUHAMMAD ALI PROTESTS

Perhaps the most famous of all conscientious objectors was Muhammad Ali. The heavyweight champion of the world claimed, "Why should they ask me to put on a uniform and go ten thousand miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people in Vietnam while so-called Negro people in Louisville are treated like dogs and denied simple human rights?"



STOKELY CARMICHAEL

Stokely Carmichael – the leader of the Black Power movement – objected to African-American participation in the war effort. He claimed that LBJ should resolve to use the non-violent practices they embraced from the Civil Rights movement on Vietnam.



LBJ REFUSES THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S NOMINATION IN 1968

In 1968, faced with growing protests over the war in Vietnam and a challenge from pro-peace Democrats which threatened to ruin his party, LBJ announced that he would not seek a second term in office. Had he been evaluated on the basis of his social and domestic policies of all – he would likely rank near FDR as a successful President. But he will be remembered as much for Vietnam as anything else. And for choosing not to seek re-election:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJ73p75oJek>



THE ELECTION OF 1968

The Democratic Party, which had risen to enormous popularity under LBJ – was devastated by the loss of Johnson's leadership. McCarthy, although he won an early primary, was a far less formidable Democratic opponent that Robert F. Kennedy and the Vice President Hubert Humphrey. When Kennedy was assassinated in 1968, just as his candidacy was gaining traction and momentum, the Party fell further into turmoil.



CHICAGO, 1968

As Hubert Humphrey accepted the nomination of the Democratic Party inside the convention center, riots erupted among the anti-war Democrats outside the hall. Americans unsettled by the conflict over Vietnam and the recent change plague of assassinations and rioting began to look for a law and order candidate who might be able to provide answers. The Republican nominee: Richard M. Nixon.



VIETNAMIZATION

Richard Nixon claimed to have a secret plan to bring peace with honor to the Vietnam War – and to have the wherewithal to restore law and order in America. His policies on Vietnam became known as “Vietnamization” – the transference of responsibility for the conduct of the war to South Vietnamese soldiers. The prospects of such a plan were grim. Winning was no longer an option.



BOMBING CAMBODIA AND LAOS

In an effort to target the supply lines of the North Vietnamese and prevent the spread of communism to other nations in Southeast Asia, Nixon authorized the bombing of targets in both Cambodia and Laos. This, of course, exceeded the powers granted in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and sparked massive protests on campus and in the streets of the United States.





STUDENT PROTESTS AND KILLINGS

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY AND JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

HENRY KISSINGER

The role of Henry Kissinger in negotiating secretly with the North Vietnamese and ending the war is much discussed.

Kissinger's work to negotiate an end to the war – mostly with the Chinese – was largely an attempt to buy time and save face for the United States; by the early 1970s, declaring victory and leaving was the great priority:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQ3LIqzR6-Q>



OPERATION LINEBACKER

The bombings of North Vietnam resumed while a final negotiation of peace was resolved. The bombings were the first since LBJ had ceased the raids in 1968. North Vietnam's Easter offensive was halted by the strategy, and the negotiating position of the United States and South Vietnam much improved.



In order to force the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table and secure an honorable peace, bombing raids were ramped up in the early 1970s.

THE PARIS PEACE ACCORDS

- The agreement restored the 1954 boundaries of Vietnam.
- A cease-fire was put into place.
- North and South Vietnamese forces were allowed to maintain their current positions and re-supply as necessary. This allowed hundreds of thousands of North Vietnamese soldiers and Vietcong to establish themselves within South Vietnam.
- United States troops would leave within sixty (60) days, and all POWs would be released.
- Peace negotiations between the official government of South Vietnam in Saigon and the Vietcong would be allowed to take place and a peaceful settlement achieved.
- The reunification of all of Vietnam would be accomplished through peaceful means.

ENDING THE CONFLICT IN VIETNAM

- The evacuation of the Saigon embassy finally occurred in April of 1975. The United States attempted to take in as many South Vietnamese as possible out of the country.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd-yNBH xodw>